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II. CLAIMS

1-3. Cancelled

4. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~claim 3~~ claim 18, wherein ~~said~~ substances (G) that are added to said first permeate (C) are sodium, potassium or calcium compounds.

5. (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 16 ~~claim 1~~, wherein during steps a) and b) ~~said first and said second stages~~, the initial solution wine (A) and the first permeate (C), ~~respectively~~, are held under pressure.

6. (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 16 ~~claim 1~~, wherein said process is carried out in a continuous manner.

7. (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 16 ~~claim 1~~, wherein said process is carried out in a discontinuous manner.

8-9. Cancelled

10. (Currently Amended) An apparatus according to claim 20 ~~claim 9~~, further comprising pump means (22, 26) adapted to keep the wine solution ~~to be processed~~ (A) under pressure as it is being treated in the first initial process station (3).

11. (Currently Amended) An apparatus according to claim 20

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~~claim 9~~, further comprising pump means (54) adapted to keep the ~~said~~ first permeate (C) under pressure as it is being treated in the second final process station (7).

12. (Currently Amended) An apparatus according to claim 19 ~~claim 8~~, further comprising, ahead of ~~said initial~~ the first process station (3), filter means (25) that are adapted to prevent the membrane means that are a part of the two process stations (3, 7) from being damaged by solid particles that may be present in the wine ~~solution~~ to be processed (A).

13. Cancelled

14. (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 4 ~~claim 3~~, wherein the substances (G) that are added to said first permeate (C) are selected from the group consisting of hydroxides, carbonates, tartrates and acetates ~~of sodium, potassium and calcium~~.

15. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~claim 1~~ claim 16 where the first ~~stage~~ membrane is selected from the group consisting of reverse osmosis, nanofiltration and ultrafiltration membranes.

16. (New) A process for the reduction in the amount of volatile acid compounds present in wine, comprising

a) passing the wine (A) through a first membrane to separate the wine into a first concentrate (B) and a first

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permeate (C), where the compounds that are responsible for the volatile acidity of the wine are retained in first permeate (C);

b) passing the first permeate (C) through a second membrane to separate first permeate (C), into a second concentrate (F), where the compounds that are responsible for the volatile acidity of the wine are retained in second concentrate (F), and a second permeate (E) containing the wine with a reduced amount of volatile acid compounds; and

c) recovering second permeate (E).

17. (New) The process of claim 16, where the second permeate (E) is combined with first concentrate (B) and the combined (E) and (B) stream is recycled to the initial solution (A).

18. (New) The process of claim 16, further comprising adding substances (G) to first permeate (C) that are adapted to at least partially neutralize said compounds that are responsible for the volatile acidity of the wine prior to passing first permeate (C) through the second membrane.

19. (New) An apparatus for reducing the volatile acidity of wine in a two-step process while retaining substantially all the other components of the wine comprising

a first process station (3) having membrane means for separation of the compounds that are responsible for the volatile acidity of the wine,

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means (12) to add solid or liquid additives (G) to the permeate (C) resulting from the first step of the two-step process, and

a second process station (7) having membrane means for separation of the compounds that are responsible for the volatile acidity of the wine from the remainder of the wine, and

a collection means for the wine having reduced volatile acidity and containing substantially all the other components of the wine, where

in the first process station, the wine to be processed (A) is separated into a first concentrate (B) and a first permeate (C), where first permeate (C) contains the compounds that are responsible for the volatile acidity of the wine and at least most of the volume of the wine, and

in the second process station the first permeate (C) is separated into a second concentrate (F), which contains the compounds that are responsible for the volatile acidity of the wine and a second permeate (E) that comprises the wine with reduced volatile acidity and substantially all the other components of the wine (A).

20. (New) An apparatus according to claim 19, further comprising an intermediate reaction station (6) consisting of an upright container (61) adapted to be filled with additives (G), a grille (62) constituting the bottom wall of container (61), and a tank (63) for housing the same container and a siphon (64), wherein the tank (63) has an

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inflow branch (55) for the permeate (C) coming from the first process station (3) and an outflow branch (56) downstream of the siphon (64) for conveying the permeate through to the second process station (7) upon undergoing the desired treatment imparted by the contact with additives (G).

21. (New) An apparatus for the discontinuous selective removal of volatile acidity from wine while retaining substantially all other components of the wine comprising a process station (200) containing removable membrane means for separation of the compounds that are responsible for the volatile acidity of the wine,

a first membrane means in process station (200) suitable for separating wine (A) into a first concentrate (B) and a first permeate (C), where first permeate (C) contains the compounds that are responsible for the volatile acidity of the wine and at least most of the volume of the wine,

a first reservoir (100) connected to process station (200),

a second reservoir (140) connected to process station (200),

optional means (12) to add solid or liquid additives (G) to the permeate (C),

a second membrane means in process station (200) having different selectivity from the first membrane means and suitable for separating first permeate (C) into a second concentrate (F) which contains the compounds that are responsible for the volatile acidity of the wine (A) and a

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second permeate (E) that comprises the wine with reduced volatile acidity and substantially all the other components of the wine (A), and

a collection means for the wine (A) having reduced volatile acidity and substantially all the other components of the wine,

where, in operation, the first reservoir (100) collects and stores wine to be processed (A) for delivery to process station (200),

process station (200) containing the first membrane means receives wine (A) from first reservoir (100), separates wine (A) into a first concentrate (B) and a first permeate (C), and returns first concentrate (B) to first reservoir (100) and first permeate (C) to second reservoir (140),

first membrane means is removed from process station (200) and replaced with second membrane means,

process station (200) receives first permeate (C) from second reservoir (140) and optionally treats first permeate (C) by contact with additives (G), separates first permeate (C), into a second concentrate (F), where the compounds that are responsible for the volatile acidity of the wine are retained in second concentrate (F), and a second permeate (E) containing the wine with a reduced amount of volatile acid compounds, and

second permeate (E) is delivered to the collection means.